

University of Groningen

Vom rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum: Mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im "Rationale divinatorum officiorum" des Durandus von Mende (1230/1-1296). Kirstin Faupel-Dreves

van der Ploeg, K

Published in:
Speculum-A journal of medieval studies

DOI:
[10.1017/S0038713400100764](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038713400100764)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2003

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van der Ploeg, K. (2003). Vom rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum: Mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im "Rationale divinatorum officiorum" des Durandus von Mende (1230/1-1296). Kirstin Faupel-Dreves. *Speculum-A journal of medieval studies*, 78(4), 1287-1288.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038713400100764>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Vom rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum: Mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im "Rationale divinorum officiorum" des Durandus von Mende (1230/1-1296) by Kirstin Faupel-Dreves

Review by: Kees van der Ploeg

Source: *Speculum*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 1287-1288

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Medieval Academy of America

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20060954>

Accessed: 11-12-2018 08:28 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Medieval Academy of America, The University of Chicago Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Speculum*

KIRSTIN FAUPEL-DREVS, *Vom rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum: Mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im "Rationale divinorum officiorum" des Durandus von Mende (1230/1–1296)*. (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 89.) Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2000. Pp. xvii, 432; black-and-white figures and tables.

Since the discovery of medieval art in the nineteenth century, the function, symbolic meaning, and systematic character of Christian imagery have been recurring themes in art-historical studies. One of the few medieval sources dealing with these complex problems is Durandus of Mende's *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, in its encyclopedic ambition a typically thirteenth-century undertaking. Although his work is referred to frequently by scholars, a thorough investigation of its precise content and purpose as far as the arts are concerned has been lacking. Kirstin Faupel-Drevs has now made a major step toward filling that gap.

Art historians are often very precise in their analyses of architecture and works of art, whereas they are not equally critical when it comes to the medieval texts they use as their sources (with historians it frequently works the other way around, since, as we all know, every profession cherishes its own shortsightedness). By subjecting Durandus's dense text to a close reading, Faupel-Drevs is able to show that the *Rationale* is not a manual for symbolic explications, as it has often been used, but one particular writer's interpretation of images and elements such as liturgical vestments and ritual actions that have a certain image-like aspect to them. To a large extent, Faupel-Drevs argues, Durandus's interpretation is to be understood as a reflection of his clerical education.

Faupel-Drevs, herself a theologian, has intelligently chosen as her starting point, not a current theory such as reception aesthetics or structuralism, but the influential ideas of St. Augustine on the very nature and function of imagery—the first semiology ever, one might say—and Hugh of St. Victor's fourfold explication of Scripture. However, Durandus also based his concept of images on many other, quite varied sources, as Faupel-Drevs is able to prove, summarizing the work of other scholars as well as her own. Among his immediate predecessors as an interpreter of the liturgy is Sicard of Cremona, against whose *Mitræ seu De officiis ecclesiasticis summa* Faupel-Drevs characterizes Durandus's work: it appears "in sich geschlossener zu sein, die Themenbereiche sind systematisch nach Schwerpunkten geordnet und in der Abfolge direkt aufeinander bezogen" (p. 211)—which confirms its encyclopedic character once more.

In establishing a relationship between the natural and the metaphysical worlds, Durandus reasoned along much the same lines as Augustine and Hugh. In this context the church building with all its ornaments serves as the concrete manifestation of the mystical Church, which mediates between our world of sin and the glory of heaven. On the one hand, Faupel-Drevs systematically demonstrates the importance of images to the medieval church; on the other, by emphasizing Durandus's typically clerical approach, she makes it clear that his work is not to be considered a panacea for iconological problems as such. Indeed, Durandus was above all concerned with the right, that is, the theologically justifiable, use of images, for he was aware of the danger of idolatry. One gets the impression that in Durandus's view as long as a deeper meaning could be established—whether or not it was intended by the artist or his patron—the danger of idolatry could be avoided. The acute analyses presented here show us that, even in the Middle Ages, art, at least for a well-educated cleric, was not as unproblematic and self-evident as we often tend to think.

It is exactly at this point that some questions arise from an art-historical point of view. It is true that Durandus with his rather abstract theological manner treats architecture and the visual arts almost equally. That is probably one of the reasons why he has been called upon so often to confirm modern theories of architectural iconology. However, there was

a significant difference in the Middle Ages between images that depict something, whether a story (*historia*) or a symbolic image (*figura*), that is, an intellectually construed visual invention, on the one hand, and architecture, on the other. Though architecture is highly representational, it does not depict as such, and its symbolic content is somewhat arbitrary: while the image of a crucifixion is precisely that, a church on a cruciform plan does not necessarily refer to the Crucifixion—one needs to have the wish to see it that way. Durandus certainly had that wish, but how widespread was his approach? It remains hard to say to what extent Durandus's symbolic interpretation of the church building is to be understood mainly as a clerical concern, even as a particular cleric's "professional deformation" *tout court*. More should have been said about the practical consequences of such an attitude for the way architecture was looked at in the Middle Ages beyond the inner circle of ecclesiastics. It is not even clear whether Durandus's far-fetched interpretations were generally shared in his own world, notwithstanding the obvious popularity of his treatise. His ideas—as becomes clear from the study of his manifold sources—appear to be firmly rooted in the tradition of the cathedral schools, which by his day were being superseded by the universities; as Faupel-Dreves notes, Durandus exhibits hardly any trace of Aristotelianism (p. 58).

Faupel-Dreves's interest in the relationship of art and religion, which had become so contentious by the end of the twentieth century (pp. 1–3), prompted her study. Therefore it would have been appropriate to find something in her book about that relationship in the Middle Ages, if only because it would have cast some more light on the impact of Durandus's and others' ideas on the practice of medieval art and architecture. Nonetheless, her book is very helpful for an understanding of medieval art.

Toward the end of the book Faupel-Dreves's use of semiotics tends to become less Augustinian and more "Parisian"; in particular, Umberto Eco's views are put to good use. This gradual transformation of semiotics in the course of the chapters—it seems to start with the analysis of Durandus's concept of sacraments (pp. 161 ff.)—results inevitably in rather general conclusions. On several occasions the author stresses that Durandus's is an open system of generating meaning. It seems that in the end this openness tends to reduce Durandus once again to what had been implicitly criticized at the outset of her book: a justification for having anything signify anything.

The book is provided with useful indexes, but it is to be regretted that for bibliographical abbreviations the reader is referred to the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Most readers will probably find it annoying, at the very least, not to have the full titles in the book (how much extra space would they have taken up?), but the omission is particularly inconvenient for art historians, who are unlikely to have the *Realenzyklopädie* within easy reach.

KEES VAN DER PLOEG, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

ALAN FOREY, *The Fall of the Templars in the Crown of Aragon*. Aldershot, Eng., and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2001. Pp. xiii, 279; 7 black-and-white plates, 3 tables, and 5 maps. \$84.95.

Arguably no country offers more archival material on the fall of the Templars than does Spain. Heinrich Finke was the first foreign scholar to make extensive use of this treasure to enhance our understanding of the international and regional implications the spectacular events of 1307–12 had. Some others have followed in his footsteps, though none with as much dedication and competence as Alan Forey. In 1973 Forey's pathbreaking study *The Templars in the Corona de Aragon* gave a remarkable impetus to research on the military orders, quickly becoming the standard reference for any scholar working in the field. Thirty years later, after a series of comparative articles as well as a monograph on the military